

Young Citizens in Action, the youth department of VSB, published "One Foot in the Door" in 1998 - a research report into volunteering and community relations amongst young people. This is the summary report of an update to that study, carried out amongst young people in Belfast at the end of 2006.

Questionnaires and focus groups were used to collect information from young people around Belfast - this included both those involved and not involved in volunteering.

We would like to thank all of the people that took part in the survey and the focus groups. In addition we would like to thank the Volunteer Development Agency for carrying out this research.

Volunteering is an experience that benefits me greatly in every aspect of day to day life, qualities I learn such as confidence, being a good team player, self esteem, being able to address a group of people. It is enjoyable worthwhile and I just love it!



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Why Not Ask Me?

KEY FINDINGS

Young people are taking part in a wide range of voluntary activity including Summer Schemes, Cross Community Activity, Music, Art and Drama, Fundraising and Volunteering as a Youth Leader.

The most important reasons for starting to volunteer were to **gain skills and experience**, for **self-satisfaction** and to **contribute to career development**.

Benefits young people are gaining from volunteering include **gaining experience**, **learning new skills**, **doing something worthwhile**, **having fun**, **personal development**, **making new friends**, **sense of satisfaction at helping other people** and **getting good experience for their CVs**.

Young Volunteers also expressed a set of wider benefits to the community such as **prevention of antisocial behaviour**, to **assist other young people to widen their life chances** and **change their role models**.

Young volunteers are interested in receiving accreditation for volunteering, for example the **Millennium Volunteers Awards Scheme**, which provides young people with an award for Volunteering hours carried out.


Young volunteers feel that **training** related to their volunteering is important.

Young people felt that a key to a positive volunteering experience was to ensure that they are involved in the decisions that affect them.


Why Not Get Involved?

The biggest reason young people gave for not volunteering was that they had never been asked. This was closely followed by a lack of information. A lack of awareness of the benefits and being too busy were also important factors, as were lack of flexibility and variety. **The majority (91%) of young people who were not currently volunteering would volunteer if they were asked.**


Most of the young volunteers got involved because of a friend or family member, with being a member of an organisation and schools/colleges also being important.




Being active in my community, helping others achieve their potential.




Supporting an activity which you are passionate about and which ultimately benefits your local community.



A lot and I love doing it. It's fun and beneficial for me and the children I work with.



Making a valuable contribution to a local community



It is a chance to help others and gain new experiences that I wouldn't otherwise get

Volunteering and Community Relations

The majority of respondents (71%) expressed that their community background did not prevent them from volunteering in other areas. 78% of young people who took part would be interested in voluntary projects directly aimed at cross community activities.

A massive 91% of respondents said they believed that volunteering can contribute to an improvement in cross community relations.

Young people engaged in volunteering expressed their view of citizenship in terms of having their **own place in the community and making a contribution**. They also emphasised **acceptance and respect** of others.

WHAT NOW?

So what is VSB going to do with the results of this research? We are passionate about volunteering, and hope to use these results to help us to promote volunteering amongst young people.

We are also going to make other voluntary organisations aware of the results of the research, and encourage them to promote flexible, diverse volunteer roles for young people, and to engage and consult them at every stage of their involvement.

We plan to help young people get a taster for volunteering, by providing Challenge Days in voluntary organisations around Belfast.

We will also continue to provide clear, accessible information about volunteering, through the new Northern Ireland wide Website www.volunteernow.co.uk where people can find out about volunteering opportunities in their local area.

WHY NOT ASK ME? WELL HERE GOES...

Are You Missing Out? Young Volunteers are very enthusiastic about the immense impact volunteering is having not just on their lives, but on the lives of others as well as the wider community.

Volunteering is an excellent way to gain new skills, enhance or develop current skills, meet people with similar interests, and do something you enjoy!

Are you interested in getting involved? We can help you to find a suitable volunteering opportunity from a wide range of possibilities. We can also tell you about how to get involved in the Millennium Volunteers Scheme!

Check out the contact details on the back of this booklet and get in touch!

VSB

VSB is a local development agency with 40 years of experience supporting, encouraging and promoting citizenship and participation through voluntary activity. As the Volunteer Centre for Belfast, Castlereagh, North Down and Ards, VSB helps to enable individuals to access voluntary opportunities, matching volunteers with voluntary placements, and maximising mutual benefits. VSB provides support each year for 3000 volunteers and almost 800 organisations whose work involves volunteers.

Young Citizens In Action

Young Citizens In Action is the Youth Department within VSB. The project aims to resource, support and empower young people aged 16-30 to make a valid contribution to their community through volunteering.

Check out our Website!

The Young Citizens in Action Website is found at www.youngcitizens.org.uk. It is specifically aimed at 16-30 year olds in Northern Ireland, and provides information about issues regarding citizenship and volunteering opportunities. It also contains latest news articles about matters affecting young people. The Website is interactive, and attempts to gauge the opinions and attitudes of young people through our "Question of the Week" and online discussions via our message board about social, political and environmental issues.

WHAT DOES VOLUNTEERING MEAN TO YOU?